4. Time Reckoning

305 The Negro is happy-go-lucky and does not bother about "time." Time plays no role at all in Africa; indeed, the Negro regards it almost as an insult when a White hurries him because "he has no time." After all, there is lots of time. It is due to this contempt, also, that the Negroes never know how old they are, or rather, that they never find it necessary to remember. The same fact serves to explain their inability to combine numbers into conceptions and logical conclusions, even though they have a good
[307] grasp of numbers up to 10,000, and beyond that with some difficulty.

The Pangwe possess no designation for the time segment corresponding to our solar year. Instead, they reckon according to mbú. Each mbú (which should be translated roughly as a half year) comprises two of the four seasons that are established for the Pangwe region (see Section 1, p. 2 /Ed., this section of Vol. I is not translated/). To one of our years, therefore, there are two Pangwe "years," or, as the natives who have come in contact with Europeans express it, mbú mesúte mebót, "years of the Blacks."

One mbú includes the great dry season and the brief rainy season and is called esób, from a zób (okón), "to sharpen (a knife)," because knives are sharpened at this time to clear the farms; in other words, it might be called the farming season or sowing season. The second mbú includes the short dry season and the great rainy season and is called ojún, from a jún, "to mourn, to wail," in other words, the fasting season; it corresponds very well to our winter, which is likewise a time during which nature sleeps and people starve. The Pangwe explain the name by saying that at the beginning of the rainy season all "food" is planted, and therefore food becomes scarce, but perhaps the expression arose in former habitations when the rainy season brought with it special misfortune, such as floods.

The correspondence of the seasons of the year among the Pangwe to the divisions of our solar year is, accordingly, as follows.

584 innocent and anxiously avoid anything that might give rise to
836 gossip. Thus, if we speak with the Pangwe about sexual matters, we constantly hear the word oson, "shame," oson this and oson that. Admittedly, wherever European influence is spreading, the
[177] use of oson decreases, for together with this influence the religious conceptions upon which shame is based are disappearing (as we saw in the case of sin, nsõm); at the same time, moral sensibilities are becoming laxer, and there are no longer any self-imposed restraints.

With free love universally prevalent, it naturally happens
836 also that several lovers find their way to the same girl in one night, especially when she is no longer a beginner, and she takes "pity" -- as the Pangwe themselves say mockingly -- on them all (1). With such nžila, especially the older ones, the

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1. Even to keep track of their number is too difficult a task for her memory; for that reason the Jaunde girls count the number of their friends on little sticks of raffia (see Zenker).

men also permit themselves the use of offensive expressions and crude jokes, such as would be unheard of and strictly prohibited with a young girl -- especially the future wife. As an example,
[831] phalli are sometimes made of wood and then displayed wrapped in a leaf.

As has already been indicated, liaisons of the heart based on
831 genuine love are by no means uncommon. Nobody, on the other hand, will be surprised to learn that for the most part they are of limited duration and are incapable of bearing the burden which we expect of them. Thus I did not learn of a single case of a person
[762] committing suicide because of unrequited love or a spurned courtship, even though women hang themselves because somebody stole a few of their miserable hens, and men shoot themselves because their father sold a daughter in order to buy a wife, instead of leaving her to the son, the girl's brother. Generally speaking, the power of Negro love is not as great as that of the love of the Whites.

the two opposite angles and would represent the axis of migration, mfa'a mañ, "toward the sea." The masculine direction seems to have been the place of origin of the ye (feminine?) clans, the feminine direction, that of the ésa clans. Trilles places with the latter the ébi clans, which are, geographically, from eastern clans; I wonder if they ought not rather to be connected with the ye clans since ébi means "hole," "chasm" (yee = valley, ravine). In the bilaba, masculine commodities come from the female sector, and vice versa.

These apparent contradictions would be resolved by applying the principle of double symmetry, or of sexual complementarity, similar to that which makes paternal, nonuterine half brothers called bobenyañ, "my mother's sons." This principle might be expressed somewhat as follows: every being capable of life must, in order to exist and be complete, include the opposite sex. In other words, bisexuality, a universal vital principle, should be found in every part of the universe /creation/. Stoll finds proof of this in the language, where the tone levels in his view constitute genuine differentiation by grammatical sex genders, and especially in the rites whose purpose appears to be not to make men entirely masculine or women entirely feminine, but rather to give to each sex the necessary complement of the opposite sex.

Whatever may be thought of this theory, it is a fact that, because of the apparent or real absence of grammatical sex gender in the language, the majority of the early writers, even Trilles, did not attach enough importance to real gender, to the sex actually attributed to objects, particularly to magical and ritual materials. We know that spear, akoñ, saber, fa, and probably the large drum, mbaé, are male; calabashes and cooking pots, rattles (mengoñ), the double bell (nkeñ) are female; the drum-telephone, nkul, is androgynous; horns for medicaments, minlak, are male at the pointed end, female at the hollow end, and the same with the rifle. As to numbers, my conclusions are diametrically opposed to those of Stoll, who believes even numbers to be male, and odd, female, though admittedly he advances as proof the large part played by odd numbers in feminine rites, which runs directly counter to his theory of double symmetry.

The numerical system is in any event only imperfectly known. Counting is based on 10, with traces of an 8:10, (awôm), basis /116/ and of 8, mwom, /having?/ perhaps the same root as different classifiers. The so number is 9. Nyin, 4, seems related to a YI